

STATINTL

# These Days . . . . . By John Chamberlain

## Fulbright's Chancy Bet on History

I WOULDN'T want to be in Sen. J. W. Fulbright's shoes. For, in criticizing the Johnson Administration for "over-reacting" in the Dominican Republic crises last April, the Senator has, in effect, tied his reputation to the assurance that the Dominican people are not in imminent danger of being taken over by Communists or Castroites.

True, history may eventually bear Sen. Fulbright out. But observers who are fully as qualified as any the Senator depends upon just do not go along with the Fulbright optimism.

The Senator would probably scoff at the idea that the Dominican June 14th Movement, which is Castro-oriented, represents any continuing menace to the chances for a "strong democratic government" (Fulbright's own words) emerging from the election nine months from now. Nevertheless the June 14th Movement continues to recruit youths for espionage, sabotage and terrorism, bringing them into Santo Domingo for instruction and sending them back under discipline to the countryside to become "sleepers" in the mountains and the farming regions.

At least 3000 trainees have gone through this mill, learning how to use radio equipment and unconventional arms. Their weapons will hardly be surrendered merely because the official

agreement between the factions calls for it.

THAT the surrender of even the most conventional arms is extremely unlikely is proved by the behavior of the rebels in the Gen. Elias Wessin y Wessin contretemps.

The rebels made surrender of arms conditional on the banishment of Wessin y Wessin from his army post and, indeed, from the country. Forced by U.S. pressure to give in to the rebels' tactical move, Wessin y Wessin stepped down.

Whereupon the rebels escalated their demands; without blinking an eye, they imposed new conditions, making surrender of arms conditional upon the removal not only of Wessin, but also of a whole group of conservative army officers.

Absurdly enough, there was never any counter-demand from the so-called "right" for the expulsion of Col. Francisco Caamano Demo as a "symbol" of rebel extremism.

FULBRIGHT, a one-sided critic, has generally applied double-standard thinking to the business of keeping any balance between left and right extremists.

He will not be exposed by events as long as groups like the June 14th Movement "play it legal," as they will probably do during the nine months of Hector Garcia Godoy's provisional Presidency. As long as the legal amenities are observed, the Senator will be able to maintain that the future history of the Dominican Republic is bound to conform to his hopes.

But I am putting the Senator's blast against the

Johnson Administration's "over-reaction" in my prophecy file. Let's see how things turn out nine months hence.

Surely, the Senator has not been lucky in his projections in the past. He spoke of the "myths" of Communist menace just before the Maoists became really menacing in South-east Asia.

He has treated Castroism in Cuba as a "nuisance." Well, Fidel, the operator of the Cuban "nuisance," continues to build high-powered radio stations for use in the effort to create other "nuisances" in Guatemala, Panama and Venezuela.

This, of course, does not guarantee that Castro's words will be sufficiently heeded to result in revolutionary overturns throughout Latin America. But when Fulbright dismissed Cuba as a "nuisance," he risked encouraging a complacency among Americans that could easily let the nuisance get out of hand. After all, Lenin was merely a "nuisance" when he was sitting around the cafe tables in Geneva. But, with the quirks of history, nuisances, like other things, can escalate into something qualitatively different.

FORTUNATELY for our sense of wariness, Sens. Thomas J. Dodd and Frank J. Lausche, both belonging to Fulbright's own Democratic Party, believe that it is better to "over-react" to Communist threats than it is to under-react.

Nine months from now, when the Dominicans choose their President, we will see whether Dodd or Fulbright is closer to the mark.

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